

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

WELCOMING THE 39TH BIENNIAL CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF AMERICA TO WASHINGTON, DC

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Ms. PELOSI. Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome more than 700 delegates and 1500 total participants to the 39th Biennial Clergy-Laiety Congress of the Greek Orthodox Church of America to Washington, DC. The theme of the 39th Biennial Congress is Gather My People to My Home, which recognizes the value of each person and, as Archbishop Demetrios of America has written, acknowledges that many people are struggling and seeking a spiritual home where they can find peace and hope.

The Greek Orthodox community in San Francisco is an example of the beautiful diversity of my hometown. I am proud that several of my constituents, including Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco and Fathers Stephen Kyriacou and Aris Metrakos and lay leaders from the Holy Trinity Church and Annunciation Cathedral of San Francisco, will be in Washington for the Congress this week. I would also like to congratulate my friend Andy Manatos who will serve as the Chairman of Clergy Laiety Congress during this conference.

The House of Representatives is blessed to have had many Greek Orthodox members of Congress over the years. Today, the community is well-represented by leaders such as JOHN SARBANES of Maryland, ZACK SPACE of Ohio, NIKI TSONGAS of Massachusetts and GUS BILIRAKIS of Florida.

Members of Congress have expressed strong support for the Greek Orthodox community through the years including awarding the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award bestowed by the Congress, to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in recognition of his outstanding and enduring contributions toward religious understanding and peace.

The religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox community continues to be a top priority for Members of Congress. A bipartisan group of members on the House Foreign Affairs Committee recently sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Turkey urging him to do everything possible to preserve the Ecumenical Patriarchate and to end restrictions and practices which threaten the viability of this nearly 2,000-year old spiritual beacon. The millions of Orthodox Christians in America and around the world can be assured that Congress will continue to advocate for their right to worship and practice their faith without undue government interference.

As Greek Orthodox clergy, parishioners, and hierarchs visit our nation's capitol this week, I thank them for their leadership and wish them a successful conference.

ENCOURAGE INITIATIVE AND SELF-ESTEEM

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge support for a bill I have just introduced, H.R. 6457, the "Encourage Initiative and Promote Self-Esteem Act".

There are many people in our country who receive Social Security Disability benefits (SSD) because they have a "waxing and waning" disease—Behcet's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Lupus, Parkinson's, Cancer, AIDS and Arthritis are examples of "waxing and waning" diseases.

This process of seeking SSD and keeping it is often times an adversarial one. The climate of suspicion that applicants and recipients say they feel leaves many to view the Social Security Administration (SSA) with a jaundiced eye. Everyone who actually gains disability benefits remembers the hoops of fire they had to jump through during the application process. As a result, many people often do not consider a try at working, fearing that the SSA will use that against them to deny future benefits. With concerns over fraudulent claims, I can understand how this environment came to be. But that doesn't make it right.

For people with "waxing and waning" diseases and conditions, they know that they will have good days and bad. They know that, barring a cure, they will always be sick, but that does not diminish their spirit. There needs to be a program that encourages people in this situation to secure temporary employment when they feel they can work without placing their SSD at risk for the times they cannot work.

H.R. 6457 would install a system based on a sliding scale. The more money one earns, the fewer benefits he or she receives. But there will be a built-in incentive to stay the course because the total monthly income when working will be more than either the work income or SSD.

Imagine a situation where those on SSD who have diseases that "wax and wane" could work, without fear, when able. That would be a lot of money put back into the Treasury in payroll withholdings and taxes—and more money put into the economy in increased purchasing, not to mention the contribution to society and elevated self-esteem of the workers. Think about the faith these people would have in a system of government that treats its people with dignity and respect instead of suspicion and contempt.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6457 to improve the lives of thousands of Americans.

IN HONOR OF MR. WILLIAM T. MUNS

HON. JASON ALTMIRE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. William T. Muns, a native son of Beaver County, Pennsylvania who is an outstanding champion for veterans.

From 1965 thru 1968, Bill proudly served his country as a member of the United States Army. This service included a one year tour in Vietnam, serving as a Financial Liaison Specialist with the 709th Maintenance Battalion in the Mekong Delta Area. Upon his return stateside, he completed his enlistment with the 82nd Airborne Division, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

In September 2001, Bill accepted his current position as Beaver County Director of Veterans Affairs. Since taking this position, Bill and his staff have increased the federal benefits for county veterans from \$14 million to \$42 million. This exceptional service has been recognized by the Pennsylvania State Adjutant General.

As a charter life member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 862, Bill has served as treasurer and was recognized as Vietnam Veteran of the Year for 2002. In addition to this prestigious award, Bill has also received a number of honors from the community, including being named Beaver County Jaycees Man of the Year 2003, the State Veterans Service Officer Award for 2005–2006, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 862 Distinguished Service Award for 2001.

Bill is also a husband, father, and grandfather. He is married to Virginia Martin Muns and together they have three children—Laura Evangelista, Ted Muns, and Jenn Basinger. Bill and Ginger also have five grandchildren—Rebecca, Gabriella and Adam Evangelista, and Mason and Ethan Muns.

Bill and Ginger will be missed and treasured by the Beaver County veterans' community for years to come. I want to commend them for their long and distinguished commitment to helping America's heroes. I wish them a wonderful retirement in their new home of Sarasota County, Florida and thank them for the tremendous service that they have provided to our community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BASF
FREEPORT ON THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the BASF Corporation's Freeport, Texas facility. Freeport

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.